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ABSTRACT

College students do nct wish to live in a 24-hour quiet environment. The dormitory residents at Indiana University responded to a 30-item questionnaire ccnstructed by a planning team frcm the Office of Residence Life. Their responses tc each item are recorded and those with higher means are pcsitively endorsed. Results of the survey were tabulated, by residence hall, and given back to the Coordinators of these units who were then respcnsible for developing a plan for change. It is presumed the lcng term results of this project will include a number of changes within each of the residence areas. A complete copy of the questionnaire is included, and though school specific, it could be adapted elsewhere. (BP)

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AN EVALUATION OF LIFE IN THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE HALLS FROM AN ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

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This report summarizes the results of the study conducted through the combined efforts of the Research Unit of the Counseling Center and the Department of Residence Life of Indiana University. It had two purposes. To acquire information concerning students' perceptions of significant aspects of residence hall life and to obtain students' recommendations concerning possible methods of improving the situation (environmental redesign).

With these two purposes in mind, it was determined that the Ecosystem model for assessing student perceptions of their environment would be the most appropriate. The Ecosystem model attempts to assess the "fit" between students and their living environments. Its unique component is that it attempts to go beyond assessment of students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction by seeking student input into potential campus redesign (Daher, Corazzini, and McKinnon, 1977). Schuh and Allan (1978) have suggested a five stage plan to implement the Ecosystem model.

Stage one involved the development of the planning team. The planning team for this study consisted of John Schuh, Director of Residence Life, Thomas Hennessy, Associate Director of Residence Life, and Patrick Utz, Staff Psychologist at the Counseling Center. Each of these three members, in an attempt to expand the scope of the team, sought questionnaire items from the staffs of agencies which work directly with the residence halls. These included food service, security, residence halls, residence life, and student government. Since these people were seen as potential change agents, their input was expected to increase the probability of change.

Stage two of the program involved determining the assessment areas. A primary concern here was to identify question areas in which environmental redesign would be possible. Items which concerned areas in which no redesign was possible were eliminated.

Stage three included the assessment technique. Appendix A includes a copy of the questionnaire which was developed by the planning team. A two-phase assessment included the development of 29 items in which students were asked to rank particular statements about their living environment on a seven point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). The second half of the questionnaire asked students to identify items for which they had very strong feelings in either a positive or negative sense. They were allowed five choices in this section. Students were then asked to list these items and to respond to two questions concerning them. The first was, "Why do you feel strongly about the item?" The second was, "What can be done to improve this situation?"

Stage four includes assessment and analysis. The population for this study was the approximately 12,000 students who live in the residence halls of Indiana University. A stratified random sample consisting of approximately 5% of the total population was generated through the Data Systems and Services department of the university. A sample of 600 students was thus generated. Approximately one week before the questionnaire was distributed, a letter was sent to students in the sample indicating they would be receiving a questionnaire. They were encouraged to respond because of the value of the information to the institution and the possibility of environmental redesign. The questionnaires were then distributed to the sample by the residence halls staffs. Approximately two weeks after the first distribution a second questionnaire was sent to the sample. As a result of these processes the potential sample was reduced from 600 to 570 by virtue of elimination of those who had incorrect addresses or had left the university. Of these 570, 47% responded as a

result of the first mailing. Another 14% responded as a result of the second mailing. Thus, an overall return rate of 61% was obtained.

Stage five consisted of a redesign and evaluation. This report, of course, is a preliminary evaluation of the results. Along with the overall results for the residence areas, a statistical breakdown of the responses by residence hall was given back to the Coordinators of these living units, who were charged with developing a plan for change within ten days. Particular areas of concern thus would be dealt on the level in which change was most likely to occur. It is presumed the long term results of this project will include a number of changes within each of the residence areas.

Methodology

Much of the methodology has been explained in the introduction to this report. The overall data analysis, however, consisted of simple frequencies (SPSS frequency) for all of the residence units other than Eigenmann Hall. Eigenmann Hall was eliminated from the overall responses since it represents a rather unique subset of the general residence hall population. Eigenmann Hall houses single, primarily graduate students who seem to have very different environmental needs than the overall undergraduate population. A separate analysis of the Eigenmann results was given to the Coordinator of this living unit.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the sample. The actual number of returns was 339 for this analysis. However, the 36 responses from Eigenmann are not included, and consequently the sample for this table includes 303 responses. As can be seen from Table 1,

freshmen and sophomores represented slightly more than 70% of the sample. The sample is also represented somewhat more by females than males. Approximately 91% of the sample were caucasian. In looking at the breakdown by residence units the halls seemed relatively equally represented, although Foster and Briscoe were somewhat under-represented. Over 50% of the sample were in their first semester of their living in residence halls. Since this was gathered in the fall semester, it can be seen that the majority are in either their first, third, and fifth semester.

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of Sample

Age:	$\bar{x}$ = 19.05	N = 303	%
Class:	Freshman	147	48.5
	Sophomore	69	22.8
	Junior	48	15.8
	Senior	29	9.6
	Graduate	7	2.3
	Other	2	.7
Sex:	Male	125	41.3
	Female	174	57.4
Ethnicity:	American Indian	1	.3
	Asian	4	1.3
	Black	11	3.6
	Latino	3	1.0
	Caucasian	277	91.4
Residence Unit:	Briscoe	21	6.9
	Forest	36	11.9
	Foster	24	7.9
	GRC	33	10.9
	McNutt	30	9.9
	MRC	17	5.6
	Read	35	11.6
	Teter	29	9.6
	Willkie	41	13.5
	Wright	33	10.9
	Eigenmann	36	

Table 1 (continued)

Demographic Breakdown of Sample

	$\bar{x}$ = 19.05	N = 303	%
Number of Semesters in Res. Halls:	One	161	53.1
	Two	17	5.6
	Three	55	18.2
	Four	4	1.3
	Five	39	12.9
	Six, plus	26	8.6

In reporting these results it is important to point out that the satisfaction factor of older students must be interpreted with some caution. Since the students have the option of leaving the residence halls, it is presumed that those who have some problems may have left the residence halls for their upper years of development. Consequently, those who are sophomores or above are quite likely to have been more satisfied and this may not be an accurate reflection of general satisfaction of students with the residence halls lifestyle.

Table 2 presents a breakdown of the responses to each of the 29 items along with a mean score. The higher the mean for this table, the greater the level of satisfaction. As can be seen, the item receiving the most positive endorsement was the one which dealt with the responsiveness of the housing management staff to student needs in connection with physical facilities. Similarly, item 21 concerning custodial care of the living unit received similarly positive endorsement. A general result of this study seems to suggest that students find custodial management of the residence units to be more than adequate. Students also seemed

to feel there were adequate opportunities for recreational activities and alternative areas of study available in residence units. While the residence assistants, as indicated by item 9, received general positive responses, their scores were significantly lower than those of the custodial staff.

The students reacted most negatively to the possibility of living in a residence unit in which 24-hour quiet was enforced. Over 2/3 of the sample responded negatively to this item. A second item which seemed to receive consistently negative responses was item 29 which concerned the quality of the food preparation in the residence center. Item 27, which concerned the availability of credit courses in the residence halls was also responded somewhat negatively. However, as will be seen in the second section of the instrument this did not seem to be a particular concern to the majority of the students. Overall, the rest of the items seem to be somewhat distributed around the neutral point on the scale, suggesting that student opinion is fairly divided on many of these issues.

Table 2

Responses to Items for Entire Sample
(N=303)

Item	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	$\bar{x}$
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	8	15	28	30	79	95	46	5.05
2	6	15	41	35	69	90	44	4.92
3	160	56	18	17	12	23	15	2.30
4	62	63	44	66	30	20	15	3.17
5	2	2	9	18	36	98	136	6.02

Table 2 (continued)

Responses to Items for Entire Sample
(N=303)

Item	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	$\bar{x}$
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6	15	27	28	64	60	68	39	4.59
7	6	14	34	35	63	95	52	5.03
8	30	45	40	30	46	74	34	4.20
9	9	15	15	41	61	88	70	5.19
10	3	6	18	49	63	100	62	5.33
11	80	35	19	42	23	25	76	3.87
12	12	28	28	86	58	57	26	4.32
13	42	43	31	62	37	45	35	3.86
14	45	42	46	96	32	24	11	3.41
15	7	7	21	24	84	85	66	5.19
16	30	35	57	81	49	27	16	3.68
17	26	19	28	69	48	59	45	4.40
18	8	7	8	33	45	112	82	5.44
19	11	12	26	49	80	77	41	4.81
20	5	18	14	84	70	71	32	4.68
21	12	13	11	11	46	82	119	5.51
22	10	15	28	53	78	75	36	4.71
23	6	11	20	28	47	104	78	5.30
24	27	27	38	43	65	65	28	4.22
25	5	19	32	47	69	82	42	4.81
26	35	29	29	50	25	52	72	4.36
27	81	47	35	61	30	26	15	3.09

Table 2 (continued)

Responses to Items for Entire Sample
(N=303)

Item	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	$\bar{x}$
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
28	28	36	50	90	44	34	17	3.81
29	99	73	39	21	36	23	7	2.68

Table 3 presents a breakdown of the time that a particular item was responded to by the sample. Altogether there were 1064 responses given to the 29 items. This indicates an average of over three responses per student. Two items, number 29 and 11, stood out in terms of the frequency of the student discussion. Item 29 concerned the quality of food preparation and item 11 discussed the possibility of purchasing a no-breakfast meal contract. All of the items were discussed by at least one member of the sample with item 15 concerning knowledge of residence rules being the least frequently discussed item.

Table 3

Analysis of Frequency of Responses to Items of Part II

Item	Count	% of Responses	% of Cases
1	18	1.7	6.4
2	23	2.2	8.1
3	76	7.1	26.9
4	28	2.6	9.9
5	36	3.4	12.7

Table 3 (continued)

Analysis of Frequency of Responses to Items of Part II

Item	Count	% of Responses	% of Cases
6	34	3.2	12.0
7	8	.8	2.8
8	52	4.9	18.4
9	36	3.4	12.7
10	16	1.5	5.7
11	120	11.3	42.4
12	13	1.2	4.6
13	59	5.5	20.8
14	21	2.0	7.4
15	5	.5	1.8
16	18	1.7	6.4
17	24	2.3	8.5
18	32	3.0	11.3
19	12	1.1	4.2
20	12	1.1	4.2
21	77	7.2	27.2
22	7	.7	2.5
23	39	3.7	13.8
24	28	2.6	9.9
25	7	.7	2.5
26	42	3.9	14.8
27	36	3.4	12.7
28	20	1.9	7.1
29	165	15.5	58.3

Discussion

The item which received the most negative response on the questionnaire concerned the desire of a particular student to live in a residence hall which had a 24-hour quiet rule. The second most negatively endorsed item concerned the quality of food preparation. An overall concern of students was food preparation as opposed to the food itself. There was some variability among residence halls, although the overall response to this item was generally negative.

Two items which received negative endorsement seemed most likely to be capable of immediate change. These concerned the availability of faculty within the residence hall to meet students and the availability of an interesting guest speaker program. While some residence halls seemed to respond more positively to this, for the most part the students reported that it would be an improvement if more interesting guest speakers and more faculty made themselves available in the residence units. Similarly the opportunity for cultural events received a negative response from a significant number of the students.

Further comparisons between the residence halls may open the possibility of recommending to students areas which are more likely to satisfy particular needs or interests. At the present time, it would be judged sufficient that these results be sent back to the individual coordinators for possible implementation. On the positive side, some items which received extremely positive endorsement concerned the respect the residence hall staffs have with privacy, the work of the custodians in the living units, the availability of alternative study areas, and the availability of recreational programs in the residence centers. Along with the particular items which received consistently positive responses it was judged that the overall analysis seemed to suggest a significant degree of satisfaction among those living in the residence halls.

References

Daher, D.M., Corazzini, J.G., and McKinnon, R.C. "An Environmental Redesign Program for Residence Halls." Journal of College Student Personnel, 1977, 18 (1), 11-15.

Schuh, J.H., and Allan, M.R. "Implementing the Ecosystem Model." Journal of College Student Personnel, 1978, 19 (2), 119-122.

APPENDIX A

PART I

Listed below are a series of statements. Please read them, and on the continuum to the right of each statement, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it by placing an X in the appropriate blank.
The following definition of terms may be useful to you:

Resident Assistant (Resident Fellow): This person is an upperclass or graduate student who is assigned to a floor or hall and is responsible for interpersonal, social and academic experiences of students.

Residence Life Staff: Includes the Resident Assistants and Residence Life Coordinators.

Housing Management Staff: Includes the Housing Manager, maintenance and custodial personnel, and clerical staff.

	Very Strongly Agree			Neutral			Very Strongly Disagree
1. I have received adequate printed information which describes services and resources available to students on campus.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
2. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my living unit (house, floor, hall).	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
3. I would like to live in a residence hall, not necessarily the one I live in presently, that would have 24 hour quiet.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
4. Interesting, informative guest speakers make presentations in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
5. Residence Life Staff respect my privacy in my room.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
6. The Housing Management Staff are responsive to my needs concerning physical facilities.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
7. I know what services are available at the main desk in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
8. I am able to study in my room when I wish to.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
9. The resident assistants (resident fellows in MRC) in my center are available to meet my needs.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
10. I have adequate opportunities to participate in recreational programs offered through my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
11. I would like to purchase a no-breakfast meal contract. (Explanation: It would be mandatory to have a closed dining room at breakfast and lunch with entrance only past the line checker only once per meal. The saving would be $45.00-$50.00 per year.)	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
12. Student government in my residence center offers me opportunities to participate in leadership positions.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
13. Established quiet hours help create an atmosphere which supports my efforts to study in my room.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/

	Very Strongly Agree			Neutral			Very Strongly Disagree
14. I am satisfied with the opportunities I have to meet with faculty members in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
15. I know the rules of my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
16. The opportunity for cultural events in my center, i.e. concerts, arts and crafts, meets my needs.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
17. I have the opportunity to talk with someone in my center about my personal problems, such as homesickness, relationships, or academics.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
18. I have and need an opportunity to study in alternative areas of the residence center, such as libraries or study halls.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
19. There are adequate opportunities for social activities in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
20. The Key does a good job of describing residence hall living at Indiana University.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
21. The custodian in my living unit keeps the area clean.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
22. I have received adequate printed information which describes the services and resources available to students in my center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
23. I feel safe and secure in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
24. The general attitude of the staff employed in the food service department is courteous and helpful.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
25. I know the rules of Indiana University.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
27. I am in favor of a policy allowing residents to enter the dining room only once per meal. (Explanation: When non-paying non-residents enter the dining room and obtain food, costs are increased. These costs are reflected in the board rate paid by residents.)	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
27. There are classes offered for credit in my residence center that meet my academic needs.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
28. I have an opportunity to participate in personal development workshops, such as assertiveness training, leadership training, and study skills in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/
29. I am satisfied with the quality of food preparation in my residence center.	___/	___/	___/	____/	___/	___/	___/

PART II

Now that you have completed Part I, go back through the items and identify not more than five items that you feel very strongly about, in either a positive or negative sense. Write the number of those items in the blocks provided below. The, next to the item number, write why you feel strongly about the item, and what you would recommend to improve the situation.

Item Number	WHY DO YOU FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT THE ITEM	WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION

Thank you for your help with this project.